

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00
EB-07 DHA-02 /107 W
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R 211730Z JUN 77
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TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1016
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
USUN NEW YORK 725
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 4587

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, KN, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA

REF: SEOUL 4974

SUMMARY: ARGENTINE BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA ON
JUNE 14 FOLLOWED UNILATERAL DECISION ON NORTH KOREA TO WITHDRAW
MISSION IN FACE OF SEVERE SUSPICION AND SOME HARASSMENT BY GOA
SECURITY FORCES AND HARDLINE ELEMENTS AMONG SENIOR MILITARY.
IN CLIMATE ON ANTI-MARXISM, ARGENTINA DID NOT HAVE SIGNIFICANT
POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC INTEREST IN MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONS TO
OFFSET IRRITATIONS AND SUSPICIONS WHICH HAD DEVELOPED, AND
NORTH KOREANS WERE SIMPLY TOO ANNOYING AND STRANGE TO
OVERCOME ARGENTINE DISTRUST AND LACK OF INTEREST. END SUMMARY

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1. SINCE MILITARY COUP OF MARCH 1976, GOA HAS LOOKED WITH
JAUNDICED EYE AT COMMUNIST MISSIONS IN BUENOS AIRES. THIS IS
REFLECTION OF BOTH IDEOLOGICAL AND PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS.
PRESENT GOA IS FIRMLY ANTI-MARXIST IN IDEOLOGY, AND IS DEEPLY
CONCERNED OVER ACTUAL OR POTENTIAL EFFORTS OF COMMUNIST
MISSIONS TO SUPPORT SUBVERSION AND TERRORISM IN ARGENTINA. GOA
INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY AGENCIES HAVE KEPT CLOSE WATCH ON

SOVIET, CUBAN, NORTH KOREAN AND OTHER COMMUNIST MISSIONS. OPINIONS DIFFER WITHIN GOA ON POLICY TO BE ADOPTED TOWARD COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. MORE CONSERVATIVE, HARDLINE ELEMENTS HAVE PRESSED FOR EXPULSION OF SUCH REPRESENTATION, OR AT MINIMUM DRASTIC REDUCTION IN STAFFS OF COMMUNIST MISSIONS, WHILE PRAGMATISTS RECOGNIZE THAT ARGENTINA ENJOYS FAVORABLE TRADE RELATIONS WITH BOTH USSR AND CUBA, AND THAT FORMAL BREAKS IN RELATIONS ONLY ADD TO INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS OF NATION ALREADY UNDER ATTACK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

2. MODERATES AND ECONOMISTS HAVE UP TO PRESENT MANAGED TO PRESERVE SITUATION OF COOL BUT CORRECT RELATIONS. MORE EXTREME ELEMENTS IN GOA HAVE, HOWEVER, INSURED THAT COMMUNIST MISSIONS WERE CLOSELY AND EVEN OBVIOUSLY SURVEILLED. SOME TIME AGO, TWO LOW-RANKING SECURITY OFFICIALS OF CUBAN MISSION STAFF DISAPPEARED. DESPITE LETTER FROM THEM WHICH CLAIMED THEY HAD DEFECTED, IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT OFFICIAL GOA SECURITY FORCES PICKED THEM UP, INTERROGATED AND KILLED THEM, OR THAT THEY WERE DISPOSED OF BY RIGHTIST ELEMENTS ACTING OUT OF CONTROL OF GOA. THERE HAVE BEEN VARIOUS REPORTS IN RECENT WEEKS THAT GOA INTENDED TO REQUIRE BOTH CUBAN AND NORTH KOREAN MISSIONS TO REDUCE STAFF, BUT THAT DECISION TO DO SO HAD BEEN HELD OFF PENDING FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BENEFITS AND LOSSES. NORTH KOREANS HAD BEEN PUT UNDER TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS.

3. INFORMATION AVAILABLE CONFIRMS THAT GOA SURVEILLANCE OF NORTH
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KOREAN ACTIVITIES HAS BEEN INTENSE AND CLOSE. IN MAY OFFICIALS OF NORTH KOREAN MISSION COMPLAINED TO GOA OF HARASSMENT AND DEMANDED PROTECTION. A FIRE IN THE MISSION IN MAY WAS CITED AS EVIDENCE OF HARASSMENT; IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT FIRE WAS CAUSED BY NORTH KOREANS THEMSELVES IN ACT OF BURNING DOCUMENTS AND PROPAGANDA FILMS. GOA APPARENTLY FAILED TO SATISFY NORTH KOREAN CONCERNS.

4. ON JUNE 8, PRESIDENT VIDELA RECEIVED FORMAL NOTE FROM NORTH KOREAN EMBASSY NOTIFYING GOA OF DEPARTURE OF MISSION STAFF, BUT MAKING NO MENTION OF BREAK IN RELATIONS. NOTE COMPLAINED OF HARASSMENT, DESPITE NORTH KOREAN EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS, AND STATED THAT WITHDRAWAL OF PERSONNEL WAS RESULT OF GOA ATTITUDE AND FAILURE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION. NORTH KOREAN NOTE DATED JUNE 5 WAS ALSO SENT TO EMBASSIES IN BUENOS AIRES OF COUNTRIES WHICH MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA. THIS NOTE, COPY OF WHICH WE HAVE OBTAINED AND WILL POUCH TO SEOUL AND DEPT., REPEATED SAME CHARGES MADE TO VIDELA. NORTH KOREAN STAFF HAD BEEN STEADILY REDUCED OVER PERIOD OF MONTHS BEFORE FINAL WITHDRAWAL, AND LAST KOREANS LEFT BUENOS AIRES ON JUNE 5. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME BILLS WERE LEFT UNPAID, AND DAMAGE TO RENTAL PROPERTIES HAS NOT BEEN

COMPENSATED. GOA IMMEDIATELY SEIZED CARS WHICH NORTH KOREANS HAD LEFT TO BE SOLD, AND IMPOUNDED SHIPMENT OF "PERSONAL EFFECTS AND EMBASSY FURNITURE" WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED FOR SHIPMENT TO CUBA. (NORTH KOREANS HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR INTERESTS IN ARGENTINA WOULD BE REPRESENTED BY CUBAN EMBASSY.)

5. LOCAL PRESS HAS CHOSEN TO INTERPRET MANNER OF NORTH KOREAN DEPARTURE AS BREACH OF DIPLOMATIC PROCEDURE, AND HAS OFFERED SUPPORT FOR GOA DECISION TO BREAK RELATIONS. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, EVENT HAS DRAWN ONLY MILD INTEREST IN ARGENTINA.

6. FONMINISTRY OFFICIALS IN PAST HAVE TOLD US OF GOA DISGUST OVER CRUDITY OF NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATIC BEHAVIOUR IN GENERAL, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND GOA CLEARLY PLACED NO GREAT VALUE ON CONTINUATION OF RELATIONS. NORTH KOREANS PROVOKED GOA AND GOA IN TURN HARASSED NORTH KOREANS TO POINT WHERE LATTER HAD LITTLE OPTION EXCEPT TO LEAVE. BREAK IN RELATIONS IS MINOR VICTORY FOR STERNER ANTI-MARXISTS IN GOA, AND MAY ENCOURAGE THEM TO PRESS HARDER AGAINST CUBAN AND EVEN USSR REPRESENTATION AND INTERESTS IN ARGENTINA.

7. REPUBLIC OF KOREA (ROK) INTERPRETATION (REFTEL) THAT BREAK IN RELATIONS WAS RESULT OF SOUTH KOREAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE. ROK MISSION CERTAINLY HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN PRESSING ITS INTERESTS, DISPENSING FUNDS LIBERALLY FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND EXPLOITING ACCESS TO NAVY OFFICIALS. MOST PROBABLY CAUSE OF BREAK IS THAT NEITHER SIDE HAD SUFFICIENT REASON TO PRESERVE THE RELATIONSHIP IN FACE OF IRRITATIONS AND SUSPICIONS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770222-0192
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From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Litigation Code IDs:
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SEOUL 4974
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2086944
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARGENTINE BREAK IN RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA
TAGS: PDIP, KN, AR
To: SEOUL
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/155a6479-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009